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Dr. Matthew Gutierrez, Superintendent

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February 23, 2021

Dear Parents,

You have likely heard about TEA's announcement in January that in order to participate in STAAR and TELPAS assessments this Spring a student must be present at school. That announcement was followed by the Texas Tribune's interview with Commissioner Morath on Feb. 11. I am writing to you in the hopes of providing some clarity regarding this issue.

Among other things, the Commissioner made the following points during his interview:

1. There are a number of federal and state laws that require all 1,202 school districts in the state to administer STAAR and TELPAS. In fact, TEA has posted a one-page listing of all of these laws on their website at: <https://tea.texas.gov/sites/default/files/state-and-federal-required-tests.pdf>
2. Logistical constraints prevent the State of Texas from administering these assessments in remote or at-home settings. Therefore, in order to participate, a student must be physically present at school.
3. TEA has made a number of adjustments to help school districts provide a safe on-campus testing environment – including the option to expand the test window to space out testing and an option to provide instruction remotely to those not testing (to reduce the number of students on campus during testing days).

Seguin ISD is committed to complying with federal and state laws relating to state assessments. We are also committed to providing the safest environment possible for our students and staff. While we believe that teacher assessment of learning is the most meaningful form of knowing our students as learners, we recognize that data from tests like STAAR and TELPAS can help us evaluate the impact of the COVID pandemic on student learning.

We would very much like to have as many students as possible participate in STAAR and TELPAS assessments this Spring in the safest testing environment possible.

That said, we recognize that, as parents, some of you may still feel that for health reasons coming onsite to test is not a viable option. In that case, we respect your decision to continue to participate in remote instruction, recognizing that in making that decision, your child will not be able to participate in his or her STAAR or TELPAS assessment.

Please be assured that not participating in a STAAR assessment in grades 3-8 does not affect promotion or retention decisions. However, please know that not participating in End-of-Course assessments (EOCs) at the high school level *does* have implications for students since, under current law, students are required to perform successfully on EOCs to meet graduation requirements. Although many students may have future opportunities to take EOCs prior to graduation, we believe that it is important for students to participate in EOCs upon conclusion of the course.

In the near future, you will receive more information from your child's campus regarding details for participating in STAAR and TELPAS assessments this Spring. Please reach out to campus staff if you have any questions regarding Spring testing. I cannot thank you enough for your support throughout this very challenging year.

Sincerely,



Dr. Matthew Gutierrez

Superintendent